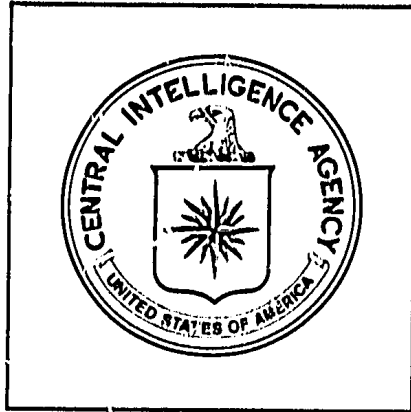


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STAFF NOTES:

Soviet Union Eastern Europe

State Department review completed

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SOVIET UNION - EASTERN EUROPE

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Moscow Says "No" to Sakharov

Nobel Peace prize winner Andrey Sakharov told Western correspondents in Moscow yesterday that his application to go to Oslo to collect the award on December 10 had been denied on the grounds that he possessed state secrets. Sakharov, who was cut off from the Soviet nuclear program in 1968, said he did not intend to resubmit the travel request since he considers the rejection "invalid." He said he hopes the decision might still be reversed, but believes that is possible only if "international opinion" lobbies on his behalf.

Moscow's denial of Sakharov's request appears to be in line with other discernible steps toward doctrinal retrenchment and tightened ideological control that has become evident in Kremlin politics in the post-Helsinki and pre-CPSU congress period. The move serves notice to domestic and foreign audiences that the case of the dissident physicist has internal political and policy implications that outweigh any damage the action may do to the Soviet image abroad.

Even so, Moscow's continuing anti-Sakharov propaganda campaign is being generally cast in terms of a defense of detente against those at home and abroad who, like Sakharov and the Nobel Committee, undermine that policy. Domestically, the denial of the visa is designed to dash the hopes for change that many other human rights activists saw in the combination of the Helsinki accords and Sakharov's Nobel prize.

In this atmosphere, the chance of a favorable reconsideration by the regime of Sakharov's request for a round trip to Oslo is remote. At the same time, there is some new fuel for speculation that at the last moment he may be offered a one-way ticket out of the country.

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[REDACTED]

The same day that Sakharov's travel application was denied, Moscow belatedly announced that last January it had lifted the citizenship of dissident Vladimir Maksimov, once a close associate of Sakharov, who left the USSR in February 1974 on a one-year visa. Maksimov, whose departure came at almost the same time that Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was expelled, was not expected to return home. The regime may have waited until now to publicize Maksimov's formal expulsion to signal that some form of expulsion is an alternative for Sakharov if he continues to press his case.

Both Sakharov and his wife are evidently struggling to do just that by keeping the spotlight of Western publicity on their cause. Mrs. Sakharov, who recently received Soviet permission to extend her stay in the West through December 20 and who may try to collect her husband's award in his name

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[REDACTED] said on Monday that for the first time Sakharov feels physically threatened. She offered no details, but added that the question of her husband's trip to Oslo was a test case of the Helsinki agreements and appealed for Western support.

In Moscow, meanwhile, senior officials of the Academy of Sciences are reportedly sounding out the chances of expelling Sakharov from the academy. [REDACTED]

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Soviet-Yugoslav Relations

With trials of Stalinist subversives in the offing, Belgrade is having trouble keeping anti-Sovietism within Yugoslavia under control.

On Tuesday, Todo Kurtovic, the Yugoslav party's secretary for ideology, raised doubts about Soviet intentions toward Yugoslavia at an assembly of top propagandists. He particularly questioned the reliability of Moscow's past assurances that it would not interfere in Yugoslav internal affairs or try to dominate the Yugoslav party. The Kurtovic speech is the most direct public criticism of Moscow since the anti-Stalinist campaign began a month ago. His statements, however, fall short of Tito's unfulfilled threat a year ago to expose every aspect of the subversive activity.

Despite Belgrade's desire to avoid an open polemic with Moscow, there are growing indications of excessive zeal in condemning the Soviets. For example, a Croat government official has privately told the US consul general that anti-Titoist emigres in the West are in league with the Soviet-inspired "Cominformists." Several newspapers--including the army weekly--have also tried to evoke the emotional patriotism of 1968 by reviving stories of the Yugoslav reaction to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Belgrade appears adamant in demanding that the pro-Soviet influence be eliminated. Kurtovic said that the Stalinists have flourished partially because of the laxity of the regime, and ordered the propagandists to describe more plainly to their audiences the differences between the Soviet and Yugoslav systems. He attacked "alien recipes" that would undo Yugoslav independence and weaken the popular will to fight in defense of the country. Kurtovic appeared especially concerned that admitted flaws in the political system and the economy would allow the pro-Soviets to promote their simplistic panacea of rigid centralism and coercion as the only solution for Yugoslavia.

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[REDACTED]

Moscow last year handled Yugoslav sensitivities regarding Soviet ties to the subversives by issuing flat public denials and privately mollifying Tito with shipments of modern arms and energetic reassurances of good will. This year the stakes for both sides may be higher.

25X1 Moscow has so far not responded publicly to this round of allegations; instead it has depicted bilateral relations as normal. The Soviet restraint may reflect their desire to avoid giving recognition to the charges. Moscow also wants to preserve as positive an atmosphere as is possible as it prepares for the European Communist conference and the Soviet party congress. [REDACTED]

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Price Rises in Czechoslovakia:
The Regime Claims No!

In the past week, top Czechoslovak leaders have sought to scotch apparently widespread rumors of impending price increases. The beginning of a new five year plan in January plus expected price increases in Poland and Hungary have evidently sparked speculation among Czechoslovaks that the prices they pay will also go up.

Premier Lubomir Strougal, speaking to the Prague rally on the occasion of the Soviet October Revolution anniversary last Thursday, assured his audience that the only thing to rise after New Year's day would be pensions. On Monday, party chief and President Gustav Husak reiterated the point, lashing out at foreign propaganda and malicious rumormongers for influencing "the naive to let their imaginations run riot." He angrily denied rumors of price hikes for food, meat, rents, and gasoline, stating flatly that such increases were neither planned nor needed.

Having sought to win popular acceptance through raising the standard of living and satisfying consumer desires, Husak is understandably sensitive to rumors of price rises. Shortly after he replaced Dubcek in 1969, the regime rolled back prices for a number of basic consumer goods and has since generally maintained stabilized price levels.

The rapid rise in international prices, however, is straining Prague's ability to shield the consumer from price increases. From 1973 to 1974, for instance, state subsidies allowing retail prices to remain stable tripled from 6 billion Kcs. (Czechoslovak crowns) to 18 billion Kcs. The regime's plan for dealing with increased raw material prices through harder work and improved management has

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obvious limits. In addition, subsidizing consumer interests also restricts the availability of funds for other projects like the long-overdue modernization of industry.

For political reasons, however, the regime will probably attempt to maintain the current price level at least until after the 15th party congress next April. In the meantime, there are several methods, such as "new" products and repackaging, to introduce hidden price increases.

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Hungarian Party Card Exchange

The Hungarian party will conduct its first party card exchange since 1967--and its sixth since 1945--in leisurely fashion over the next 12 months. The program was kicked off by party secretary Arpad Pullai, who apparently has prime responsibility for administering the program, at the Central Committee session on October 23. The exchange is expected to be completed next November when new cards are printed.

In his speech, which has only recently been published, Pullai sought to portray the card exchange as an almost routine affair. He asserted that exchange will not be a purge or "inquisition," and emphasized that the party does not suffer from political laxity or factionalism. Instead, he said, the program is intended to stimulate increased activism and ideological commitment.

Party directives on the card exchange echo this low-key approach. Certain categories of members--including manual workers not given specific party tasks, recently admitted young people, and older and retired persons--will be evaluated leniently. Also to be judged lightly will be party members who abstain from religious practices but have been unable to persuade members of their family to do likewise.

Each of the approximately 750,000 party members will be interviewed about his participation in party work, willingness to accept new assignments, ideological and political consciousness, and his life style. The authorities will also assess whether an individual has "improper materialistic tendencies."

Plans for a card exchange were announced at the party congress last March, and there has been some puzzlement as to why the regime waited so long to move forward. The regime may have felt a necessity

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to postpone the exchange to avoid a direct link with top-level changes made at the congress and shortly thereafter. The embassy reports there is speculation in Budapest that the ever-cautious Hungarian leadership is awaiting the results of the European Communist party conference and the Soviet party congress before it concludes the exchange.

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More on Albania

The political scene in Albania remains murky, but the evidence of fairly widespread personnel purges is increasing. The purges are reportedly related to a struggle between those who wish to maintain an orthodox, hard-line policy and others who see no chance of improving the political situation until Albania's isolation is ended

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Tirana has maintained its silence on the ousters, and there is no indication that the top leadership has been affected. Party boss Enver Hoxha has made no public appearances recently, but none has really been required, and his heir apparent Premier Mehmet Shehu was host at a reception last week for a visiting Chinese health delegation.

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